

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS KIM YONG-SAM

1. DURING LENGTHY CONVERSATION MAY 1 WITH AMBASSADOR, NDP LEADER KIM YONG-SAM STRUCK GENERALLY MODERATE NOTE AND EXPRESSED SOME OPTIMISM OVER CHANCES FOR HIS HOLDING MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PAK.

2. WITH RESPECT TO PAK MEETING, KIM SAID HE BELIEVED FACT OF MEETING ALONE WOULD HELP STABILIZE POLITICAL SITUATION. FOR THIS REASON, HE WAS WILLING TO TALK TO PRESIDENT EVEN THOUGH THERE WAS NO CERTAINTY THAT ANY AGREEMENT ON SPECIFIC ISSUES WOULD BE REACHED. HE HAS LET BLUE HOUSE KNOW THAT HE WOULD BE IN FAVOR OF PUTTING OUT POST-MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT WHICH SAID MERELY THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD EXPLAINED HIS POSITION ON NATIONAL SECURITY, WHICH KIM UNDERSTOOD, WHILE KIM SET FORTH HIS POSITION ON DEMOCRACY AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES, WHICH PRESIDENT UNDERSTOOD. REGARDING SPECIFIC STEPS WHICH COULD EMERGE FROM MEETING, KIM SAID HE HAS HAD WORD THAT ROKG MIGHT ASK HIM TO MAKE STATEMENT URGING STUDENTS TO REFRAIN FROM DEMONSTRATING AND TO LEAVE POLITICS TO POLITICAL PARTIES AND ADULTS. HE SAID HE WOULD BE WILLING TO MAKE SUCH A CONFIDENTIAL

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STATEMENT IN RETURN FOR A ROKG COMMITMENT TO SETTLE THE TONGA ILBO CASE FAVORABLY AND TO REPEAL THE EMERGENCY MEASURE WHICH HAD CLOSED KORYO UNIVERSITY.

3. OVER THE LONGER RUN, KIM SAID THAT HE AND OTHER OPPOSITION POLITICIANS WOULD LIKE TO SEE A COMMITMENT FROM THE PRESIDENT TO CHANGE THE CONSTITUTION AT THE END OF HIS CURRENT TERM IN 1978. KIM INDICATED THAT SUCH COMMITMENT MIGHT SATISFY MANY ANTI-ROK ELEMENTS AND DEFUSE POLITICAL SITUATION. KIM MADE NO REPLY WHEN AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT POLITICIANS WERE USUALLY RELUCTANT TO PUBLICLY DECLARE THEMSELVES LAME-DUCK OFFICE HOLDERS.

4. KIM NOTED THAT HE HAD JUST RECEIVED A TELEGRAM FROM CONGRESSMAN FRASER INVITING HIM TO TESTIFY AT THE SCHEDULED HEARING ON HUMAN RIGHTS. (BRIEF PRESS STORIES THAT DAY HAD REPORTED THE INVITATION). KIM SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR HIM, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE MAIN OPPOSITION PARTY, TO GIVE TESTIMONY BEFORE THE FRASER SUBCOMMITTEE; HE INTENDED THEREFORE TO CABLE HIS REGRETS.

5. COMMENT: WHILE KIM PEPPERED HIS REMARKS WITH REFERENCES TO PAK'S "DICTATORSHIP," HIS BASIC APPROACH WAS MORE CONCIATORY AND REALISTIC THAN IN PAST. IN PART, THIS APPROACH MAY REFLECT A FEELING THAT A "STATESMAN" LIKE IMAGE AND A MEETING WITH PAK WILL STRENGTHEN HIS STATUS AS LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (AND UNDERCUT THE INCREASINGLY ACTIVE KIM TAE-CHUNG). IT MAY ALSO INDICATE A GENUINE DESIRE TO BRING MORE STABILITY TO KOREA IN THE FACE OF INDOCHINESE EVENTS AND WHAT IS WIDELY PERCEIVED HERE AS A GROWING SECURITY THREAT. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR, BLUE HOUSE SPOKESMAN KIM SONG-CHIN INDICATED PRESIDENT PAK APPEARED MORE FAVORABLY INCLINED TO MEETING WITH KIM YONG-SAM, ALTHOUGH NO FINAL DECISION MADE. HOWEVER, PRESIDENT STILL SUSPICIOUS OF KIM'S MOTIVES. IN BOTH CONVERSATIONS, WE POINTED OUT ADVANTAGES OF DIALOGUE AND MODERATE CONCILIATORY COURSE, PARTICULARLY INsofar AS SUCH APPROACH WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO US PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR COMMITMENT TO ROK.

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